

A Better Way Foundation is a Connecticut non-profit organization that is dedicated to a sensible shift in drug policy from one of incarceration to substance abuse treatment and public health.

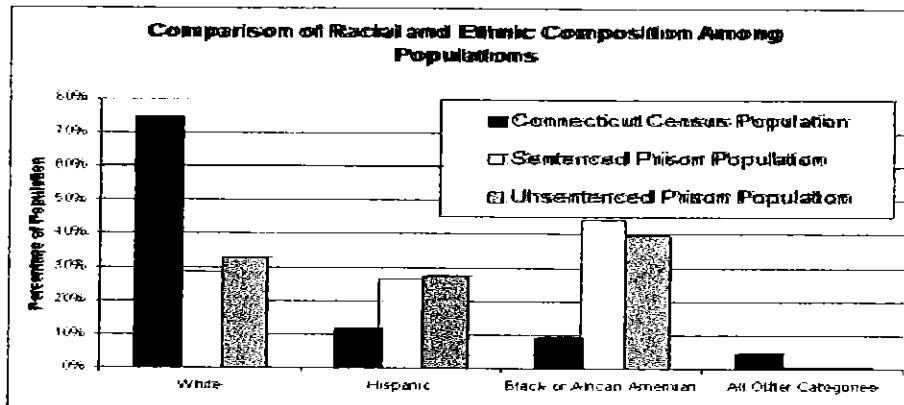
Good Morning Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am testifying today in support of Raised **SB 459** - **AAC THE ENHANCED PENALTY FOR THE SALE OR POSSESSION OF DRUGS NEAR SCHOOLS, DAY CARE CENTERS AND PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS.**

A Better Way Foundation's position is in support of reforming the currently of 1500 feet to 200 feet and making the law inactive when school or school activities are closed. We commend this committee for your continued effort to reform an unjust law to low income and people of color citizens in Connecticut.

Connecticut ranks 4th in the nation in disparities for incarcerating Blacks and worst for Latinos.

- Blacks are 37 times more likely than whites to be serving a prison term for a drug offense.
- Latinos are 18 times more likely to be serving time for a drug offense.
- In 2000, 1 in 11 black men in Connecticut between the ages of 18 and 64 were in prison/jail.
- Approximately 40% of CT's male prison population came from: Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport.
- 2009, Black & Hispanics were 87% of people locked up with drug crimes as their most serious offense.



Drug Free Zone law has not accomplished its intended goal by reducing crime and protecting our children. What the current law has done is to create a financial burden on the state and taxpayers. In 2008, almost 20,000 people were arrested for Drug Free School Zone Law, most were addicts who need substance abuse and/or mental health treatment not prison. How much has this cost the state financially? How much has this cost neighborhoods and communities?

We need a fair and effective criminal justice system that is equal for all Connecticut residents. Currently, the law allows judges to have discretion over sentencing. However, most cases are being plea-bargained and never reach the judge, making the judicial discretion ineffective. Reducing the zone from 1500 feet to 200 feet from the perimeter of the school will reduce cost to the state, keep families together by offering substance abuse treatment and alternatives to incarceration for users and maintain real public safety.

Thank you for your time.

LaResse Harvey, Policy Director
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